

ADDRESS BY
ADMIRAL STANSFIELD TURNER
TO
CIA EMPLOYEES
28 MARCH 1977
HEADQUARTERS BUILDING

This is just like an old family gathering--like being before a Senate Committee before a confirmation with all the klegg lights. I have to stand back here to be heard, do I?

I appreciate your coming together this morning. I asked for this opportunity to talk to you because it seemed to me in the roughly two months I have been associated with you and this intelligence activity that, obviously, some thoughts have been germinating in my mind as to where I think I would like to see us going and how we should get there. I wanted to share those thoughts with you--not because they are engraved in marble someplace and are never going to change--but because if I don't share them with you, you'll have more difficulty in helping me reshape those as time goes by. It would help me a great deal if we can work on this together.

In fact, when I thought about coming down here and talking to all of you about how we should do intelligence, I couldn't help but be reminded of that rather old joke about the man who drowned in the Johnstown, Pennsylvania flood of 1932. When he got to heaven they asked him to give a talk about his harrowing experiences, and just as he stood up there, he realized that Noah was going to be in the front row. Well, I'm certainly not as experienced as all of you; but, again, I felt by sharing the thoughts of where I feel I am and my approach to this business today, it would help

us work together in the future. So, I've jotted down a few points that are dominant in my thinking, and I want to just run through them informally one by one.

The first is the overriding importance of objectivity in our analysis of intelligence. The quality of our product is going to be judged by its objectivity. We have to sell our product today, we have to get it in a form that because of its objectivity, people want to read it. I happen to feel from my brief exposure in this city in the last two months, that the time is ripe--riper than its been since World War II--for people to want and to use a good intelligence product. We have a President whom you know has shown great interest in intelligence, who is regularly giving us of his time, a President who has said right here in this building in his meeting with us before the swearing in that he wants personally to participate in the decision process as to where the priority of our efforts should go. And that is great for all of us. My sensing on Capitol Hill would indicate to me that, after two or two-and-a-half years of investigations, the Congress is appreciating that the bottom line is intelligence. There is a greater need than they have ever recognized before for intelligence to help them make their decisions.

I think the public again, despite the battering we have taken in the press, is more behind us than perhaps we think. If we look at the reaction to the King Hussein leak, the public

was with us--not with Woodward. And I forced him to admit that to me a week ago Sunday. That the reaction that he and the Post got was on our side; that that should not have been leaked--not on their side. That is a great step in our direction. But, also, the time is ripe because in my view, I am impressed that despite these vicissitudes, despite this adverse publicity, thanks to the previous Directors, thanks to the previous--and in some cases incumbent--Deputy Directors, Department Heads, this Community--particularly the CIA portion of it--has held together with great professionalism and great morale in very troubled times. That is a foundation upon which we can build. So the time is ripe. But how are we objective? How can we produce objective intelligence? First, in my view, you don't get a committee and try to agree. You don't compromise everything down to the lowest common denominator. Compromise does not lead to objectivity--it leads to tasteless pablum. You've got to be bold; you've got to be imaginative; you've got to take chances. You will be wrong sometimes. We have to present the views as they are seen and not worry about detailed word changes and compromises on this and that. Because, basically, I've been a reasonably tough decision-maker in our country and our Executive Branch, and I know and can assure you that no decision-maker looks at intelligence estimates and accepts them at 100% face value or makes a decision based on that alone. What he wants to know,

what we need to do for him, and how does he shape his thinking about this problem. How does he approach it from a more analytic point of view. How does he understand the pros and cons of what is being presented to him to which he can apply his judgment. Top decision-makers don't even know the difference between "would" and "should" when somebody compromises that out for three hours at a meeting. They don't care if you tell them Army A is going to win and Army B is going to lose, or Government X is going to rise and Government Y is going to fall. They don't believe that. What they want to know is our opinion that if Army A uses its advantages and tanks to the best it may overcome the disadvantages of terrain which it faces. Or that Government X may stay in power if it reduces the inflation rate by 50%, but will be in serious trouble if there is a bad crop this year. They want to know the factors on which they should base their judgment of that situation. They don't want a flat-out prediction, and certainly not a watered-down, compromised version of three or four views which equate out to very little in which to get your teeth and to help make a choice to make your policy.

What we are here for is to serve the policy-makers of our country. We should never forget that and we should always be aware of what the policy-makers are thinking about today. We are not an academic institution trying to further knowledge for the sake of knowledge. We are here to assist the policy-makers

of our government and the Executive and Legislative Branches in their process of making good decisions. I'm not suggesting that we are here to support particular decisions or distort intelligence to fit the decisions; but we are here to help provide the foundation so that our decision-makers can make the best decisions.

That requires staying in touch to them; with what's going on in the policy-making branches of our government. The bottom line of whatever you do--in intelligence formulation, analysis, collection--the bottom line is, does this help the policy-maker make a decision in a more rational manner. Have we helped him focus on what the key points are involved here. Have we written an analysis which makes him appreciate that whether there is going to be a decision a week from now or five years from now, he's glad he read this analysis because down at the bottom, he could see that he may have to make some decision on which this bears.

Don't just produce knowledge for the sake of knowledge. Produce knowledge that's going to have relevance. I'm not saying that it has to have relevance for tomorrow's decision. It has to have some perceived relevance even in the long run for the people who read and absorb it.

My next point is to stress one you are all well aware of, and that is the legality and propriety of our operations--primarily, of course, in the collection field. It is certainly

my intent to spend my time here looking forward rather than backward. We've had enough of the backward look. We're going to be saddled with some more accusations; some more investigations. I'm sure we are going to approach them honestly. We are going to recognize that many or most of these things that are dug up are the application of today's standards of propriety to yesterday's actions. There's not much we can do about that, and we'll absorb some blows. But in every way we can, we are going to look to tomorrow. We're going to try to be sure we are carrying out the standards of propriety, ethics and legality that apply today. I'm confident from what I have seen here that you are doing that, and you have done that. We're frequently falsely accused, but we must continue to be vigilant. In fact, if I have a concern, it is really more that we may lose that sense of initiative, that sense of imagination, that sense of daring, that has made this Agency great in this area. I don't want that because it reminds me of Kipling in Tommy Adkins. You know Tommy Adkins was the British soldier nobody paid any attention to during peace time, but suddenly when the war came, they couldn't do enough for him. Today there are a lot of people who talk carelessly about not wanting a clandestine or covert capability in this country. That's because they don't perceive, in the public, the need for it. But one of these days they may not only perceive it, they may demand it of us; and we cannot be found

wanting. So I encourage you to be bold and imaginative here. Don't just sit back and take the safe course and not suggest anything that is new or different in clandestine or covert activity because you are unsure. Keep on the way you've been, with your imagination and your good ideas. Be alert; be alert to what the standards are today. If there is doubt on your mind, push the decision upward. I'll try to make the standards as explicit for you as I can; and I will never complain, never complain, if you buck a decision up to me, even if I don't think that had been necessary --because we have to be careful. But that doesn't mean that we just drop all consideration of these activities by any manner or means. We'll make mistakes. If we do there are two things that are critical. The first is that I have been informed ahead of time, because this Agency will suffer a lot less if I can assume the major part of the blame. But if it is accused of doing things independently of the Director, the country will suffer in the long run. I'm expendable, but the CIA is not. Secondly, if you ever think you've trespassed legality or propriety as the government wants to exercise them today, you must get the word to me quickly. The President of the United States again, in his talk with us here on 9 March, emphasized that was his desire-- that he wanted to be informed; to take an honest and open approach to any of these problems as they develop. So please bear that in mind.

Next, I would like to talk about the relationship of the responsibilities for the Community and my responsibilities for

the CIA. I'm speaking to you today as the Director of CIA, not the Director of the Community; but I look at the CIA from time to time from the Community point of view. I'm frankly disturbed at what I see sometimes in terms of the jealousy that exists. Your success has been too great in some regards. It is not healthy that other people are that envious of our capabilities here. It is not only their problem of perception, but it's our problem. We have to watch it. But when I look at the Community from inside the CIA, I sense too much exclusiveness--too much sense of superiority. Whether it is deserved or not makes no difference. We cannot afford today to have a whole series of exclusive independent agencies in this country. We've got to pull together as a team. I've only read one book devoted exclusively to intelligence considerations, and that's Roberta Wohlstetter's classic on Pearl Harbor. And the problems that she's uncovered and discussed there--of lack of coordination between different agencies of intelligence that have different bits of information--is even more dangerous today with the multiplicity of agencies and technology, compared with 1941. We've got to look more at trade-offs between our various intelligence agencies; trade-offs in operations; trade-offs in budgets. Admiral Dan Murphy, for the Intelligence Community, is doing a good job in that area. It's true we have lots of distance to go. We've got to develop new, more visible management techniques. We're showing how we are controlling this entire operation, and making sure it knits together well.

Next let me talk about a few of my own personal idiosyncrasies in regard to procedures and style. To begin with, I am splitting my time between my Executive Office Building office and my office here at the Agency. There are a couple of reasons for this. One is that it is just plain efficient. I have a lot of meetings and activities downtown and it is very wasteful of my personal time dashing back and forth. Secondly, however, I am trying very hard to be your front with the White House, your front with the NSC Staff, your front with the Congress, with the DoD, with the rest of the Executive departments. I think today that is an extremely important function. As I said in the beginning, we must sell our product; and if we are going to restore the Nation's confidence in our intelligence activity, the way to do it, in my opinion, is to have a product and to sell it and make people appreciate and recognize that what we are doing is of importance to them and to the country. So I want to provide more service to the rest of the government on a classified basis. I even want to provide more service to the public of the United States on an unclassified basis. There are lots of things that many of you do here that don't have to be classified and which the public would enjoy and benefit from knowing. I would suggest they are taxpayers and they paid a lot to get that information and we should give it to them. I realize in a sense this runs against the traditional culture of intelligence--the traditions of intelligence--but I have a personal conviction that if we do

not do something to lift the mystique of the Intelligence Community where it can be lifted properly, without infringing on our necessary secrecy which is very important, we will not survive in the form and the strength that we should in the years ahead. We simply cannot apply the culture, the outlook, the attitudes of the 1940's to the 1970's and the 1980's. But let me, on the other hand and in the opposite direction, give you my strong conviction that we are not handling that highly compartmented information on sources and methods and very sensitive information adequately. I've been out of Washington in the field for four and one-half years. I'm shocked to return. I'm shocked to find how we are handling this very delicate category of compartmented information. We are over-classifying; putting things in tight compartments that have no need to be there. Worse than that, we are handling compartmented information irresponsibly. It is a very serious problem. We know that our society believes in being open; is much greater and more dangerous, and we cannot afford it. One of the major activities that I need your help on is how on the one hand we tighten the noose around those secrets that are the family jewels, and open up the bottom and declassify and make our operations more supportive to the country, to the Congress, and to others. It's not going to be easy, but I don't want anyone to believe when I move in one of those directions that that's the only way I am going. I'm going in both, and it may seem contradictory. That's a problem, but it must be resolved.

Speaking of compartmentation, there are those who think I am too compartmented. I'm too difficult to reach. People don't have enough access to me. I'm guilty. I'm sorry, and I apologize and I hope that when I get through these initial protocols--these initial visits and discussions and everything that one has to go through when new on the job like me--that I can change that. I will try. I'll try to get around the building and talk to people at more than the front row level here. I think it is important, I come from the background of being a ship skipper, and no ship skipper can be a good one if he stays on the bridge and doesn't get down to the engine room once a day. I hope to get to know many more of you than the Deputy Directors who are in the conferences with me. But I also want to make it clear that I have a strong personal aversion to briefings. Some of you heard that. I have an aversion to briefings because I come from that Pentagon culture where briefing is an over-worked art form. I have an aversion to briefings because it is a waste of too many peoples' time. If I go to a briefing, the odds are that five or ten other people come. They want to hear some pearl of great wisdom drop on the floor. I sit there worried that I'm going to drop a bomb or thud instead of something worthwhile. The people that come to those briefings have heard them five or six times. It's a waste of time because I can read faster than people can talk anyway. It really gauls me to have someone put a slide up that I can read very quickly and then someone

tells me what's on that slide and doesn't elaborate any. Okay. There are very few briefings that cannot be put in writing; some cannot, I agree. What I like is to get myself up to speed--to get up to the level of the other participants--by reading this material and then engaging in a dialogue and discussion. I can't do this if I don't know the basic material. I love that. The joy in life to me is to dialogue. I like to get together with people and bat things around. You'll find I throw all kinds of wild ideas on the table. I encourage you to look on my aversion to having you come in with charts and lots of people in that light. I hope that we will be able to promote the time for enough of these dialogues as we go forward.

Lastly, I would like to talk about control, because I have very strong and personal views on the degree of control I feel necessary to exercise over Central Intelligence Agency activities. There are six areas in which I want to have firm personal control. Other than that, I want Hank Knoche to run this operation. First, our analyses--our operational decisions that are going to go to the President of the United States. I don't want to go in or be called in to the Oval Office someday and asked a question about something we are up to and not know anything about it. It's not only embarrassing, it's not a service to the President. He hasn't got time for me to say, "I'm sorry sir, I'll find out." Secondly, I want to know

of issues that will or could develop into major controversies on the Hill. Our future as a Community--our future as an Agency--is in large measure dependent on the understanding of the Congress; and again, I have a responsibility to you, to this Agency, and I want to be sure that it isn't frittered away without my assuming that responsibility. Thirdly, I want to be aware in advance of issues that are going to generate publicity--favorable or other than favorable. Because again here, our future, our success, is going to be related to how well we handle our position--our image with the American public. Next, I want to be informed in advance of operations we are undertaking that could cause a risk of life, or of major embarrassment or loss of prestige to our country. I think this is an obvious point. Fifth, I want to be aware of any activities which we judge to be borderline of legality or propriety. I've stressed that already in some of the things I've said. And finally, I want to be consulted on key promotions, assignments and awards. In all these areas I want to emphasize that I want to be fully forewarned and I want you to do the forewarning. I don't expect to call up the Operations Center every Saturday afternoon and say, "What's going on?" I don't want to be surprised. I would like you to come forward with these. In time, we'll work out a balance. You'll come forward with more things than you need at the beginning, and fine--I won't complain. I must say I am saturated on the week-ends now. I would add to that, while I like to read, I'm not

actually a speed reader; and sometimes when I get in the car I have ten minutes to read your briefing paper as I go from my EOB office to the Capitol on the Hill--a 32-page briefing paper doesn't quite do it. I really request that you boil those down. Finally let me say that these remarks on control are in no way intended to inhibit your lateral coordination with the White House Staff, the NSC Staff, the DoD, the OMB, the Congress, or any of the other agencies to whom we are providing service, because as I have emphasized several times, we must provide that service. I want you to know the territory. I want you to know what is needed out there. Be out there peddling our wares. We are in business; we have to market our product. But when it comes to these policy decisions, when it comes to these issues of publicity, or these difficult problems of operations, I want it in the Community, in the family here of this Agency, to develop our corporate position--then we'll go forward together. If we go forward helter-skelter with different policies, different decisions throughout the wide range of people with whom we deal, there is going to be mass confusion in this operation. Again, I believe the time is really ripe for us. I believe we have an unprecedented opportunity, and I couldn't say that if I didn't believe the foundation was here in the professional men and women in our Intelligence Community. We in the Agency comprise only one-fifth of that, but we are the hard core. You are the real professionals on which we must count. Your professionalism has been clear to me in the past weeks in the degree of

tremendous effort that has been made to respond to my style, to my desires. I appreciate it. I'm proud to be your Director and I look forward to learning from you in the months and years ahead. I would like to start today by soliciting first in the ten minutes I'm told we have left, or whatever it takes, your questions and comments right now. But I would also like to solicit that you and any of your subordinates send me in writing your ideas on improvement on techniques, in organization improvements, procedures around here for the next 60 days or so. Send them to me signed or unsigned. Send them to me in intersealed envelopes or not. Send them through the inter-office memo system. I guarantee you I will read them all. I guarantee you I will not circulate them. I will not guarantee an individual response. I assure Hank and the rest of the management that I won't fly off the handle and act on these because somebody said something. I'll put it in my own form and circulate for staffing if I think it is worthy of attention. But there is nobody--be he at the top of this organization, in the middle or at the bottom--who has a monopoly on good ideas. I'm looking for them. I'm looking for ways to reshape these thoughts that I have given you today. I'm looking forward to your help in doing that. The floor is open to anyone who would like to lead off now.

ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

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Address By Admiral Stansfield Turner
28 March 1977

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77-3951

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John F. Blake
Deputy Director for Administration

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